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U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Seashore

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Point Reyes National Seashore News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Searching for Rare Plants in Point Reyes National Seashore

Point Reyes National Seashore is host to over 900 species of flowering plants, representing approximately 16% of the plant species known to occur in California. Not surprisingly, this diverse flora includes a significant number of rare plant species. Presently, the Seashore is known to support 50 rare plant species, five of these are listed as Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Prior to 2001, comprehensive information describing the abundance and distribution of many of these species did not exist. Recognizing the need for a rare plant inventory, as well as the daunting task of surveying over 71,000 acres of habitat, resource managers came up with the idea of a volunteer event called the "Rare-Plant-A-Thon." The intent of this event was to involve members of the local community, agency botanists, students, and plant enthusiasts from around the San Francisco Bay area in the search for undocumented rare plant populations within the Seashore.

This year's Rare-Plant-A-Thon is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, June 7th and 8th. For more information, call (415) 464-5242.

Since the idea was first conceived in 2001, park vegetation managers have hosted four Rare-Plant-A-Thons. Over 200 volunteers have participated in these weekend events, traveling from as far away as Death Valley and Los Angeles to attend. Many of the volunteers have had such a positive experience, they have returned for several events. At each event, volunteers are given a brief training, are divided into groups, and are sent to different areas within the Seashore with instructions to survey for or monitor different rare species.

These events have been a huge success! As a result of the four Rare-Plant-A-Thons, 44 unrecorded rare plant populations have been located, documented and mapped. One species that had never before been recorded at the Seashore, the rare Humboldt Bay owl's clover (*Castilleja ambigua* ssp. *humboldtensis*), was discovered and added to the Seashore's plant list. In addition to locating new populations of rare species, volunteers also monitored and mapped 29 known rare plant populations. During our third event, one group helped transplant the Endangered Sonoma alopecurus (*Alopecurus aequalis* var. *sonomensis*) into the wild as part of a reintroduction project.

The Rare-Plant-A-Thon has generated such excitement and interest from the participants that it has now become one of the Seashore's annual events. This event has not only been successful from a resource management perspective, it also has substantially increased local awareness and enthusiasm for rare plant species here in Point Reyes.

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